

BULLETIN
OF THE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF
ST. BONIFACE

OUT OF THE GRAVE
THE DISCOVERY OF FORT ST. CHARLES IN 1908

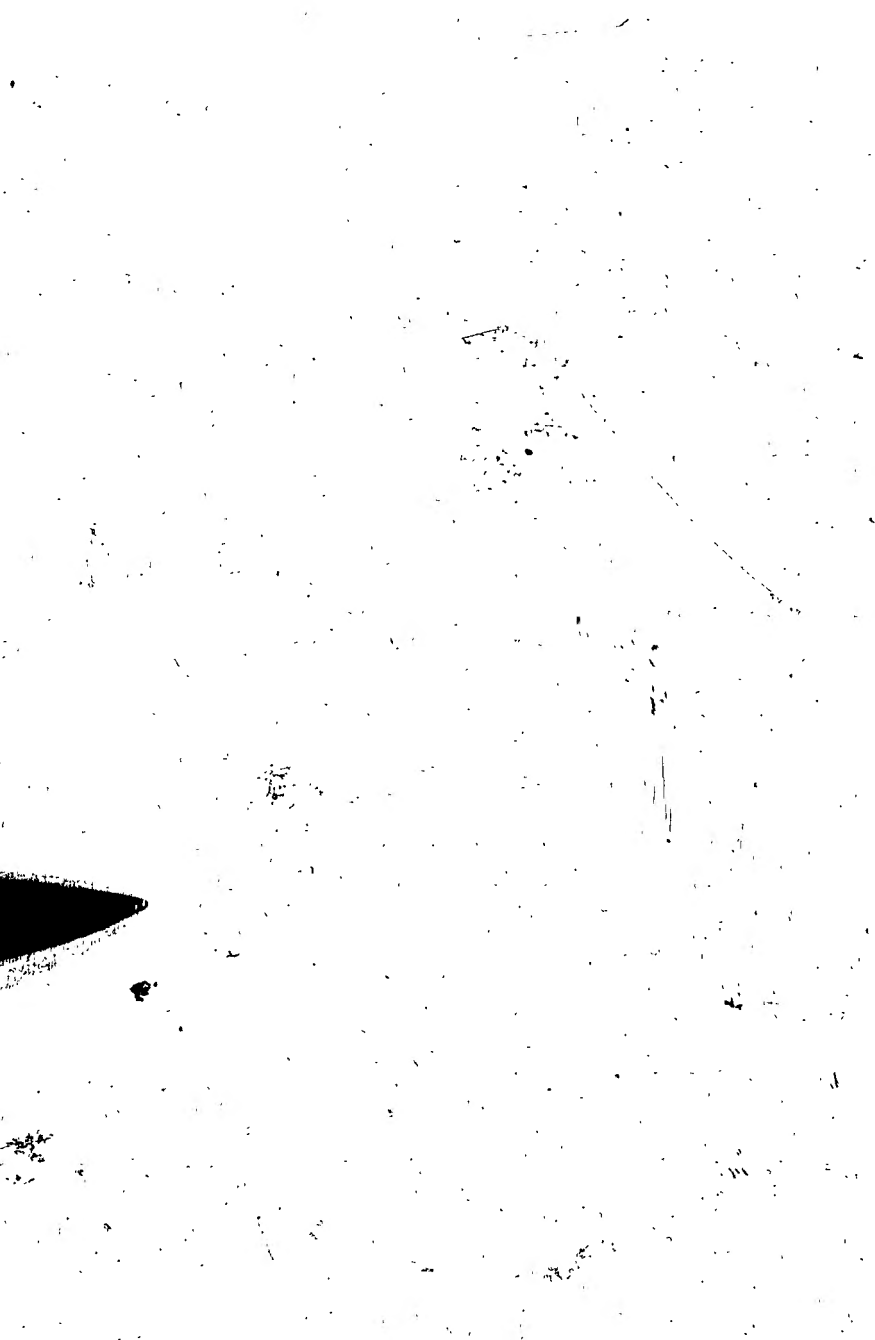
VOL. V

PARTICULAR 3

YEAR 1915



"LE MANITOBA" PRINT.
St. Boniface, Man.



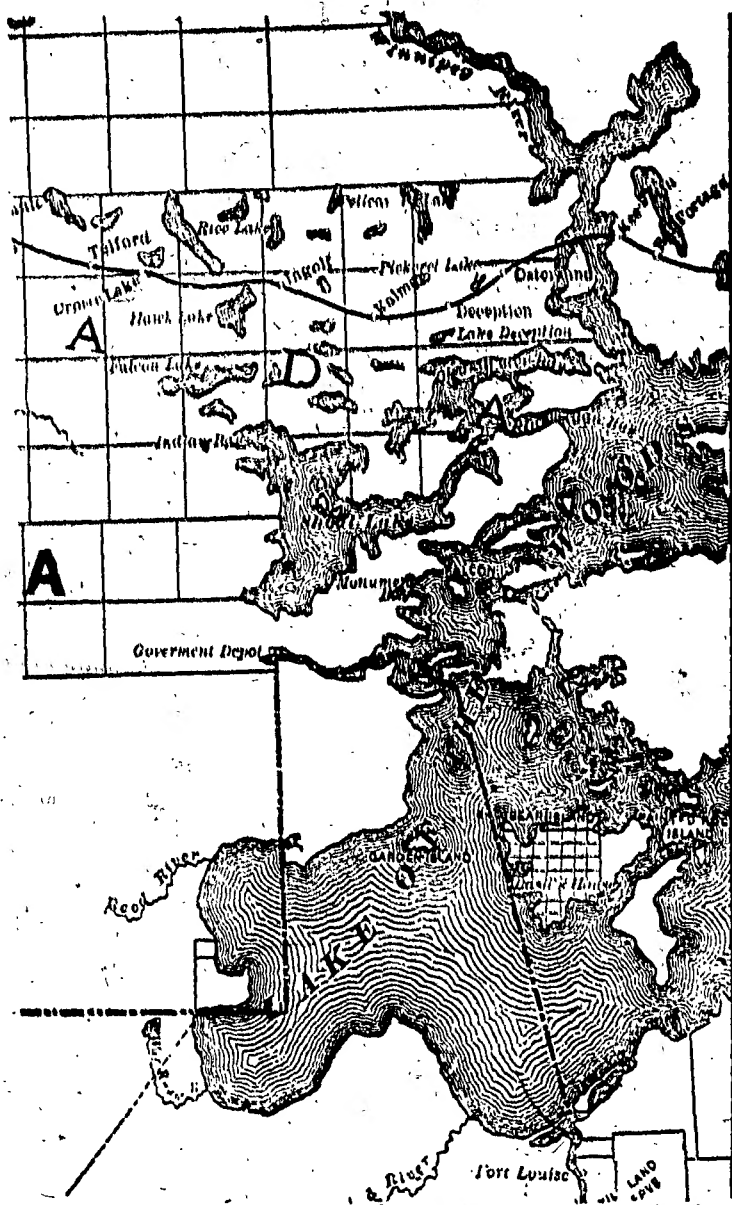
OUT OF THE GRAVE

If you glance at a map of the great Canadian Northwest, you will see before you a vast region intersected in every direction by rushing rivers and fantastic lakes. Down where it meets the United States you will notice a vast expanse of water called Lake of the Woods. It is one hundred miles long and fifty wide. Its shores are indented on all sides by deep bays and inlets, and its surface is dotted with thirteen thousand islands; few, if any, of them very large, some mere rocks, and others covered with gigantic pines and firs, where eagles even to-day build their nests undisturbed.

It will be remarked that the boundary line between the two countries, at that part of the map, cuts a very curious caper. Instead of continuing west, as it had been doing so far, it suddenly shoots north, and when approaching the centre of the lake veers west again, entering Northwest Inlet which it divides in two as far up as there is anything like comfortable navigation. The north side of the Inlet is Canadian, the south American. The American side, to its surprise, has suddenly grown into fame as marking one of the outpost in the pioneer development of the continent.

In the Canadian part of the lake, however, twenty-one miles from Northwest Inlet, though forever to be associated with it in thought, there is an island to which a deep religious interest attaches. It has a gruesome name and a history. It is called *He-an-Massacre*. Even the pagan Indians make the sign of the cross as they approach, and then paddle furiously to hurry by. They never land on the island, and never even point at it. Red men do not easily recoil from bloody memories, but a priest was murdered there in 1736, and crimes of that nature make even the unregenerate shudder. A cross now keeps guard over the once haunted island. Another rock in American waters once disputed the distinction of the massacre, but measurements, Indian traditions, and recent discoveries have settled the matter beyond dispute. Canada owns the horrible but sacred place.

The priest who was murdered there was Father Aulneau, a



THE LAKE OF THE WOODS

young Jesuit. He had gone out with the famous de la Vérendrye in an attempt to find a way to the Western Sea, which was the name of the Pacific Ocean in those days. They were to journey through a mysterious country, where people who wore white beards and owned horses and cattle and domestic fowls were said to live. The learned men of those days were sure there must be a great river there that ebbed and flowed. For, they argued, if the St. Lawrence went east, and the Mississippi south, why was it not likely that there was another going west through the regions just explored by the Jesuit Kings.

De la Vérendrye never saw the white beards nor the river. He did not even succeed in going further than the Mandan country at the head waters of the Missouri; but the wonder is that he had the courage to go so far, after the tragedy that carried off twenty-one of his men, among them his son and the priest.

Unsuspecting of danger, they had encamped on an island in the lake, but the Sioux crept up behind them, slew all, cut off their heads and, taking their scalps, disappeared over the waters. Hence the name *Ile au Massacre*. The mangled bodies were found there later and transported to the fort which had been built on the mainland at a place which is now the northeast angle of Minnesota. De la Vérendrye meditated vain things against the foe for some time, and then resumed his weary tramp through the wilderness to the sea which always receded. A record of the massacre was inscribed in the *Archives Coloniales de la Marine*, of Paris (1679-1759), but it only rehearsed the story told by a *voyageur* named Bourassa. Two years later, Father Lafitau wrote from Paris a brief account of it to the General of the Society in Rome, and that was about all that was known for a long time of the bloody ending of the missionary's career. As years went by, even the trappers forgot where Vérendrye's fort had stood. The northern storms rapidly battered it to pieces; its timbers rotted, and when its masonry crumbled and fell the weeds hastened to cover the wreck. In the same way, poor Father Aulneau's memory faded away from men's minds. To a great extent even his own Order lost sight of him, not out of negligence or unconcern, for it is very solicitous about its records, but many dispersions and

REF AC MARRIAGE



the general suppression had swept away whole mountains of precious documents, which are only now beginning to be found. As a matter of fact, neither his family, nor his birth-place, nor the college where he studied, nor the Province he belonged to in the Society was known until recently. Even his full name was a matter of dispute, until after many years the delvers in dusty archives, and the decipherers of frayed and forgotten manuscripts made it certain that he was Jean-Pierre Aulneau de la Touche. In Charneau he appears as Arnaud, which is not surprising when we see in the exquisitely beautiful handwriting of Father Pothier the very phonetic rendering of Aulneau as Ono. Pothier was very much of a wag, but he was serious in this instance.

But now, in our times, in a very unexpected fashion, the grave has given up its dead and revealed a hero and perhaps a saint.

It happened thus: In 1880, three Jesuits were giving a men's retreat in La Vendée, in France. Among the 600 who followed the exercises was a venerable old man named Aulneau. He had never before met a Jesuit, but in the course of a conversation with one of the missionaries, he chanced, or perhaps the Lord prompted him, to say that there was a precious heirloom in his family — a package of letters written by a relative, a Jesuit priest, who had been slain by the savages in the wilderness of North America one hundred and fifty years ago. The letters were examined, and the joy of his spiritual brethren was as great as that of his kindred in the flesh.

It was only then that the details of his life became known, and we can now put down as history that he was born April 21, 1705, at Montiers-sur-le-Hay, where the Aulneaus or the Seigneurs de la Touche still reside. One of his brothers was a Jesuit, another a Sulpician, and they had a sister a nun. His first schooling was at Lagon, and he entered the Novitiate when he was only fifteen. He was making his fourth year of theology when Father de Lauzon, Superior of the Canadian Mission, came to France seeking help. Young Aulneau offered himself and was accepted. He was only twenty-nine years of age when he embarked on the King's ship, otherwise the man-of-war "Ruby," commanded by the Chevalier Chaon and bound for America. There was an illustrious

company on board, for besides his three Jesuit companions, the "Ruby" carried Mgr. Desquet, the fourth Bishop of Quebec, with a number of ecclesiastics who were to fill the vacancies in the ranks of the diocesan clergy. In the group there was also the famous Sulpician Piquet, who was to build the Indian mission of La Présentation at what is now Ogdensburg, after the English had driven the Jesuits out of New York.

It is gratifying to get a glance at the young missionary's qualities of mind and heart from the letters so fortunately found in the château. One addressed to "My Dearest Mother," is dated Quebec, 10, 1734. It is a description of his journey over the Atlantic, and may serve as a remonstrance against our cowardly and degenerate fashion of crossing the deep.

"We embarked on the twenty-ninth of May," he writes, "but it was not till the thirty-first, at three o'clock in the morning, that we weighed anchor and set sail. Adverse winds had kept us in the roadstead. We congratulated ourselves the first day, on account of the headway we had made, that our journey would be a short one. But we took forty-seven days to reach the great bank of Newfoundland, and during that long run, with the exception of a few days of calm, we encountered fierce headwinds from the northwest, which more than once forced us to let the vessel sand before the gale. Our rations on stormy days were biscuits and dry bread, which each one secured as best he could."

There was some little diversion when they reached the Banks, where the leisurely mariners of the "Ruby" began to fish for cod. "In less than an hour they caught more than two hundred. Some were salted and the rest distributed among those on board. "I found them insipid. Others liked them." He saw *Tongues* shaped like a goose and nearly as large. There were also *Happe fois*, *Godies*, and *Pelyngoins*. The last-named fowl were doubtless penguins. What the others are we must give up, and like Mme. de Sévigné, *nous vous le donnons en trois*. The fog meantime enveloped the ship and they nearly ran on the rocks at Placentia, and then for three whole days were beating about to find their course.

They were still six hundred miles from Quebec, and even the officers began to grumble and grow despondent. They wanted to

put in at Cape Breton, and return to France, but favorable winds sprang up, and the weary journey was resumed.—Aulneau continuing, meantime, to tell his "dearest Mother" all he saw as they went along. He talks about the cardinal birds that lighted on the spars, the clouds of feathered creatures on Bird Island, the porpoises of prodigious size, whales, blowers and sea-cows, "which awakened if they did not satisfy our curiosity," and so on. Finally, two months after leaving France, they reached the mouth of the St. Lawrence.

He then tells her all about the river, how they were tossed about in it more violently than out in the ocean, and not to shock her too much, he says rapidly, that since "we left the Grand Bank five had died and were buried at sea." He omits reporting how many there had been dropped into the waves in mid-ocean. Indeed, the mortality must have been very great, because "for many days," he writes, "we lived on nothing but salt beef; and the number on the sick list had considerably increased." The dangerous whirlpool at the Isle aux Coudres and the difficulty about getting past it are then described. "We now discovered for the first time," he continues, "that we were in summer, for since our departure from France, we had experienced all along only wintry weather. I had, up to this, enjoyed good health, and had not even been seasick during the passage across, though it had taken seventy-five days. But three days after landing at Quebec, I was taken down with ship-fever. Twice it brought me to death's door, but thank God I have now recovered. I have already seen a few of almost all the tribes, and there is no more repulsive sight, but they have all been ransomed by the blood of Christ. How happy shall I be if He deigns to make use of so unworthy an instrument as myself to bring them to love and adore Him in spirit and truth!"

Although he refrains from describing all the horrors of that ocean voyage, his companion, Father Nau, in a letter to his Superior, lifts the veil, or rather opens the gangway of the hold of the "Ruby." "The mere sight of the gun-room was a revolution. It is a room about the size of the Rhetoric class-room at Bordeaux. There was a double row of frames swung up in it, which were to serve as beds for the passengers, subalterns and gunners. We were

packed into this dismal and noisome hole like so many sardines in a barrel. We could make our way to our hammocks only after repeated blows on our limbs and head. A sense of delicacy forbade our disrobing, and our clothes in time made our backs ache. The rolling and pitching loosened the fastening of our hammocks and hopelessly entangled them. On one occasion I was pitched out sprawling on a poor Canadian officer. It was quite a time before I could extricate myself from the ropes and wraps, meanwhile the officer had scarcely breath enough to give vent to his profanity.

"Another disagreeable feature was the company we were thrown in with day and night. We had to shun them as much as possible. But the worst of all was the stench and vermin. We had on board a hundred soldiers or so, freshly enrolled, each of whom carried a whole regiment of "Picardie" (a euphemism for an insect as unpleasant to name in English as in French).

"In less than a week these ravenous 'Picards' migrated in all directions. No one was free from their attacks, not even the Bishop or the captain. Every time we went on deck we could see that we were covered with them. We found them even in our shoes.

"Another centre of infection were eighty smugglers who had already passed a twelvemonth in jail. They also sent out swarms of marauders. These wretched men would have caused the heart of a Turk to melt with pity. They were half naked and covered with sores; some were eaten alive with worms. All that we could do did not prevent the outbreak among them of a pest which attacked all indiscriminately, and carried off twenty of our men at a stroke."

Such were Aulneau's surroundings during those three months on the wild Atlantic. "And yet while the ship-fever was burning him up, he was assiduous in caring for the unhappy wretches in the hold of the 'Ruby.'" He was hurried ashore and when the crisis was over he had a bad relapse. He finally recovered and was told to prepare for his fourth year examination in theology, "of which," the record says, "he acquitted himself with ease."

Here enters the explorer de la Vérendrye. The world was crazy at that time about the mysterious land towards the Pacific.

The court of France was very anxious to have it mapped out, but was unwilling or unable to advance the necessary funds, and so the discovery was left private enterprise.

The man who did most in that direction was undoubtedly de la Vérendrye, who ought to be rated as one of Canada's most notable heroes; a staple of which it has a plentiful supply. He is the discoverer of the great Northwest, which is developing so wonderfully in our days. His name was Pierre Gaultier de Varenne, and when he started out on his travels he was commandant at Nepigon, north of Lake Superior. He had seen service in two American campaigns, one in New England, another in Newfoundland, and afterwards fought in Flanders. He won the grade of lieutenant at Malplaquet, thanks to the nine wounds that left him for dead on the field. At the end of the war he returned to America, but without his rank and without a penny in his purse. Appointed to a little trading post near Three Rivers, he supported himself as best he could and married a wife. Governor Beauharnois, who was his friend to the last, made him Commandant at Fort La Tourette, near Lake Nepigon; "at the end of the world."

Though poor and with no future before him, he was dreaming of eclipsing Marquette, Joliet, de la Salle and the others in discovering new territories. At Mackinac he met Father de Gonnor, who had been out among the Sioux, and whose brain was seething with similar projects. Together they dreamed and schemed about the Far West, and when de la Vérendrye drew up his plan, de Gonnor journeyed down to Quebec to plead for him, and later on crossed the sea to France for the same purpose. Subsequently, de la Vérendrye showed Beauharnois a map made for him by a savage, which must have been a marvel of elementary cartography. Everything was ready but the money; and that could not be extracted from the French court, so de la Vérendrye was given a post at Winnepigon with permission to sell furs to see if he could get rich enough by that means.

At last, on May 19, 1731, he started for Mackinac with fifty men. With him was Father Mesnager, whose name, Garneau, Margry, and B. Sulte, spell Messenger — the autograph signature is very clear. They reached the Grand Portage of Lake Superior,

August 26, and wintered at Kaministigoya. The next year they arrived at Rainy Lake, and in 1732 built a fort on the shores of Lake of the Woods, which was called St. Charles after the chaplain, Charles-Michel Mesnager, who, however, soon collapsed, and had to return to Quebec. Some one had to take his place to care for the garrison, but that was only incidental to announcing the gospel to the Assiniboels or Assiniboins, the Cristihaux or Cris, and the Ojib Chipotianes, who are none other than the Mandans whom Catlin made us familiar with at a much later period. Who was to go? The young priest lately ordained and scarcely over his almost fatal illness: Father Aubin.

The proposition filled him with horror. Without counting the uninterrupted series of terrible journeys in the wilderness, and the privations to be endured, he did not know a single word of Mandan, Cris or Assiniboin, nor could any of his fellow-travellers teach him. Moreover, he was to be absolutely isolated from all religious assistance, two or three thousand miles from Quebec. There was to be no missionary near him. "I assure you," he wrote to Father Fay, "it is the hardest trial of my life, and I cannot face the situation without fearing for my salvation. The Superior has appointed me for this mission without any warning and without any regard for my intense aversion to it. I assure you it has cost me the greatest struggle to make up my mind to obey. May God deign to accept the sacrifice of my life and of every human consolation which I have made in this act of submission."

That act of submission won him the grace, for we find him writing later, "May God be blessed! Henceforth He can be my entire comfort and consolation. I have no other help than what Jesus dying on the cross will give me. What inspires me with confidence is that it is not of my own choice that I am exposed to so many dangers. From this out I must think only of the souls of the savages. The more I reflect on the sufferings before me, the more joy I feel that God has called me for the missions of that wretched country. My joy, however, would be complete if I had another Jesuit to go with me. Implore God to give me the grace not to be unworthy, by my sins, of his protection and mercy. Let us love God always and Him alone. Let us do all we can to be

like His adorable Son dying on the cross. Happy are those whom He has judged worthy of dying for Him."

No one can talk in that way, when face to face with terrible sacrifices, unless his soul is illuminated and fortified in a wonderful way by supernatural grace. He faced them with grim determination. Meantime, it is very comforting to find that the affections of his heart are not deadened or blunted. When he was in Montreal, on June 12, already on his way to the west, he writes to his mother: "To-morrow I leave here with no other sorrow than that of going too far away from you to be able to write to you often." The "dearest Mother" must have been happy and proud in her grief. She was like the mother of Father Jogues. There are very strong points of resemblance between the two young apostles, themselves separated, though they were, by a whole century.

It took him till October 23 to reach St. Charles. We have only one note of that long journey, and it was written the following year. "From the end of Lake Superior to Fort St. Charles," he says, "we travelled 300 leagues. Almost all the time our road led through fire and stifling smoke. We never once saw the light of the sun. The savages in hunting had set fire to the forests without dreaming of such a horrible conflagration. We met nothing but lakes and rocks, forests, savages and wild beasts. It was too late to reach Winnipeg, so we passed the winter in Fort St. Charles. It is a long quadrangle consisting of four rows of palisades, twelve or fifteen feet high, inside of which are some miserable cabins made of wood and mud covered with bark. Next summer I am going to the Assiniboins, who occupy all the land near Lake Winnipeg. At All Saints, if it is the will of God, I propose to go with some Frenchmen who are ready to face the same perils as myself, and join the Assiniboins, who every year, as soon as the ice forms, go over to the Mandan country for their supply of corn."

Meantime he was laboring with the Cris, trying to learn their language, which they were unwilling to teach him. He succeeded in spite of them. He was of the opinion that it would take a miracle to convert them, for they were non-sensical, superstitious, and

debauched to a degree it would be impossible to describe. Fire-water helped the work of their degradation, though he acquits his own garrison of guilt in this instance. Worst of all the religion of the Indians was devil worship.

This was the last letter he ever wrote. He ends with a thought that would indicate something of a premonition of death: "The issue of my project is known to God alone. Perhaps instead of hearing that I have succeeded, you may hear of my death. Let it be as God pleases; with all my heart I will make the sacrifice of my life."

The end soon came. Provisions were giving out at the fort, and three canoes with a party of men were sent down to Mackinac for supplies. Father Aulneau went with them, and to be sure of making the journey quickly, he asked for young Vérendrye as a companion. Permission was given, and on June 8, twenty men and the priest left Fort St. Charles, never to return.

The Sioux were then at war with the Cris, who were allies of the French. Aulneau and his party were only about twenty miles from the fort when a band of Sioux swooped down upon them. Was it in the early morning, or at their camp-fire in the evening, or when they were all asleep? No one can tell. There are several accounts of it, and they all differ. Not one of the party was left to tell the tale. Some, it is said, were drowned, but in view of recent discoveries, that is unlikely. In Father Du Jaunay's letter from Mackinac to Aulneau's mother, three years later, we read that the majority of the Indians were averse to killing the priest, but that a crazy savage, careless of the consequences that held the others in awe, struck the blow. "I have heard also," continues the writer, "that scarcely had the deed been perpetrated than a deafening clap of thunder struck terror into the whole band. They fled from the spot thinking that heaven was incensed at the deed. His chalice was taken by one of them and given to a widowed squaw. Soon all her sons perished, and she threw the sacred vessel into the river, ascribing to it all the calamities that had come upon her family." Of course this may be pure invention. Stories grow with the imagination of the narrators.

From de la Vérendrye's *Mémoires* it appears that on June 20,



RAT FORTAGE

a party of voyageurs, with thirty Cris Indians, gave him the news of the massacre. On July 29 it was confirmed by four other Frenchmen, who arrived at the fort. Beauharnois wrote, that alarmed at their long absence the Commandant sent a canoe with eight men to verify the facts. They found young de la Vérendrye lying face downward, his back gashed with knives, a hoe imbedded in his loins, and the head separated from the trunk. Father Aulneau was kneeling on one knee, his left hand against the ground supporting the body, his right raised in the air. An arrow had pierced his side and there was a deep gash in the breast. It is not said that he was decapitated. Indeed, it was reported that the Indians were afraid to touch his body, but whether the posture in which he was found is a fancy picture, or whether he was really in that attitude after the butchery, must be left to adepts in surgery or anatomy to quarrel about. The skulls, we are told, were found placed on or wrapped in beaver skins. All the skulls and some of the bodies were transported to the fort.

Father Martin relates that M. Belcourt, a missionary at Pembina, had visited the island in 1843, and had seen a mound about seven feet high which had been built over the bodies. A grave was impossible, for the island was all rock, and hence stones were merely piled on top of the remains. One is tempted to ask why Father Martin did not visit the tomb himself. The explanation is not hard to find. A journey to that remote place is even now a matter of great difficulty and expense. It was out of the question in the time of Father Martin.

De la Vérendrye left Fort St. Charles in 1737. After that all knowledge of the exact location of Massacre Island naturally began to grow dim, at least among the whites. The man who knew it all was heard to get at. On October 3, 1738, we find him at Fort Maurepas, which he built; and a few months later he was away in the Missouri country among the Mandans. In 1740 we discover him in Montreal appeasing his clamorous creditors; and in 1741 he was at Mackinac. Subsequently he made his permanent abode at Fort la Reine, and from there directed the explorations of his sons, who valiantly sustained the family traditions. They established forts in many places and in 1742 started west.



THE CHIEF POWASSIN



THE SEARCH PARTY

They reached the Upper Missouri, followed its course as far as the Yellowstone, and on January 1, 1743 pitched their tents at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, sixty years before the arrival of the American trail-makers, Lewis and Clarke.

The elder de la Vérendrye found himself meantime the victim of jealousy and hatred. Blamed by the Quebec Government (though Beauharnois was always true), accused of illicit trading, and disgusted by the ingratitude of those who had profited by his sacrifices and labors, he resigned his position as Commandant of the Northwest and withdrew from public life. He was reinstated, however, in all his honors, and others were added, but his toil, his misfortune and especially the attack on his honor had shattered his constitution, and he died on December 6, 1749. Canada owes much to de la Vérendrye.

No wonder that Father Aulneau was soon forgotten. Of course the untiring Father Martin wrote about him, but even he makes a mistake of four years in recording the date of his arrival in America: making it 1730 instead of 1734.

In 1890, however, immediately after the discovery of the Aulneau letters, the clouds began to lift. The Jesuits of St. Boniface College, Manitoba, visited *He au Massacre* immediately, and erected a cross upon it. They were accompanied by Captain Lavergnière, who knew the lake by heart, and besides had all the traditions of the Indians at his finger tips. There could be no mistake about the locality: Subsequent developments showed that no error had been committed.

In 1902, Mgr Langevin, the Archbishop of St. Boniface, who like his predecessor, had been for years intensely interested in the question, organized an expedition at his own expense to discover, if possible, the site of Fort St. Charles. They left Rat Portage September 2, on the steamer "Catherina S." and in the afternoon stopped at the *He au Massacre* to say a prayer at the foot of the cross which the Jesuits had planted there two years before. From there they went to Flag Island, where they took on board the great chief Powassin, who said he knew all about Fort St. Charles. He led them straight to the place, and told them exactly the kind of ruins they were going to find. They saw there

the remnants of a chimney with a quantity of ashes, calcine bones, etc. Moreover, everything corresponded to the accounts which Vérendrye had left about the locality, and they solemnly erected on the site a cross with the inscription:

FORT ST. CHARLES.

FOUNDED 1732.

VISITED 1902.

Great enthusiasm reigned among the explorers on their return home; but after a while doubts began to arise about the advisability of accepting their find as conclusive. The stones and the ashes were scarcely a firm enough foundation to stand on. The old chief Powassin had told them he was sure of it, but he might have been mistaken. It is true that another chief, whose name we fear all the printers of the world will gag at, for it is nothing short of Andakamigowinimi, agreed with him about Frenchmen having been there, but from time to time he alluded to a fort on the other side of the inlet. His casual utterances did not attract much attention then, but they afterwards proved to be a very valuable clue. So the conviction gradually began to force itself into the minds of those interested, that Fort St. Charles had not yet been discovered.

In 1908 another expedition was organized. The Archbishop's absence in Europe explains why he did not lead it. It started on July 10, and was composed of Jesuit priests and lay brothers. They embarked at Kenora, or Rat Portage, in an autoboot of their own construction. With absolute trust in Divine Providence and serious doubts about the boat, they started out on the lake singing the *Ave Maria Stella*. At 2 o'clock in the afternoon they arrived at American Point down at the entrance of the lake. The next morning they started, as usual, along the north shore, but several hours' search ended in complete failure. Providence, however, came to the rescue by letting Father Papin cut his foot very badly while driving tent pegs, thus rendering him unfit for work.

He did not sulk in his tent, however, but while nursing his foot he occupied himself in meditating de la Vérendrye's memoirs, and the maps and notes which he had gone over a hundred times before. The vague hints of the old Indian with the unpronounceable name also came back to him with unwonted force, and it then suddenly flashed on his mind that they had all along been following the wrong scent. The fort, he felt sure, was on the south not on the north shore. Accepting his suggestion the searchers next day traveled two miles up the inlet in the direction indicated, and arrived at a bay which the old chief had spoken of. There, stretching out in a long line, each man being responsible



THE BASE OF THE SKULL

for five feet on either side of him, and meantime cutting their way through tangle brushwood and fighting the dense swarms of mosquitoes which were as thirsty as Sioux for white blood, they were all suddenly summoned by a cry to the side of one of the party. He had come upon a number of flat stones carefully laid upon each other. The spades were quickly at work, and the great discovery was made. They had struck the large chimney of the fort without a doubt. Digging deeper they unearthed, among other things, a carpenter's chisel about eighteen inches long and covered with rust. The next day was Sunday; but on Monday the thirteenth, they uncovered a heap of bones. Among them were

scissors, nails, etc., and a blade of a knife with a name on it : Alice D. By Tuesday they had found the two other chimneys of the fort, after seventy poplar trees had been felled to clear the ground. The next day it rained, but by Thursday night, three lines of palisades had been laid bare.

The happiness of the explorers was at fever heat, but the time for their annual retreat had arrived, and they all had to pack off to St. Boniface for their eight day's seclusion. Why did they not make their retreat there? They had brought only ten days' provision, and even holy men must eat. But when the retreat was over, they returned to their work with renewed energy.

With them was a distinguished historiographer of the locality, M. Prud'homme, who had been working for years at the problem. Before two weeks had passed they had turned up nineteen skulls. De la Vérendrye's account was startlingly verified. In addition they found five bodies, two of which were in a box side by side; one with the *os sacrum* broken slantingly precisely as the wound of young de la Vérendrye was described 160 years ago. At the feet of the other skeleton were beads of a rosary and a bunch of keys. Between the two bodies was a cutlass. Both were headless. There could be little doubt that the Jesuits of 1908 met their brother who had been murdered in 1736.

With the greatest reverence all these precious relics were transported to the College of St. Boniface. Photographs of everything were taken. The picture of the skulls represents them just as they were found, carefully placed in layers one above the other. A reproduction of it would be unpleasant for nervous readers. The base of one, however, may be given as a curiosity. It shows an arrow-head still imbedded in the bone. It is curious, indeed, but may it not be something more? Garneau, quoting Bourassa, says that "Father Aulneau was struck by an arrow in the head." May not this skull, so singularly marked, be the head of the priest?

Such was the sudden and unexpected result of a search taken up at intervals during nearly twenty years. It is of the greatest interest to the students of the history of the Church in this country to know exactly where one of the great missionaries who had

gone furthest into the interior of the country was killed, and where he was buried. Of course there is no desire to claim that he was a martyr of the faith. Hatred of Christianity does not enter into the cause of his death. He was, however, a great confessor and apostle. Moreover, besides knowing the place of the tragedy, it has happened coincidentally, as we have seen, that the picture of his soul has also been given to the world. We know him now from his birth to his death, and he stands forth as one of the glorious figures of the early Indian missions. Naturally we rejoice in having rescued him from oblivion.

Independently of religious considerations, the discovery of the site of Fort St. Charles is a notable achievement in historical exploration work, carried on, as it was, by private enterprise and at considerable expense. As it has put beyond all doubt the line which Vérendrye followed in opening up the country, it deserves and almost demands the erection of a monument to mark the spot.

It will be a satisfaction to Americans to know that the sepulchre of the missionary is in the angle of the State of Minnesota at the point where it juts out into the Lake of the Woods. The Canadians, however, have the better place; namely, the island where the heroes were murdered. They also can claim the honor of having discovered both sites, and they have given us one. For it we ought to be profoundly grateful.

T. J. CAMPBELL, S. J.



